

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
-----271828Z 071424 /42
O 271803Z JAN 77 ZFF 4
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9981

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 01524

NODIS

DEPARTMENT PASS EDMONDSON

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PFOR, RH, UK
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: MEETING WITH NKOMO

REFERENCE: LONDON 1470

1. EMBASSY OFFICER SAW JOSHUA NKOMO AT THE SAVOY HOTEL ON JANUARY 27. THE ANGER WHICH NKOMO HAD DISPLAYED AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE THE EVENING BEFORE (REFTEL) HAD NOT SUBSIDED. HE OPENED THE DISCUSSION WITH AN EULOGY OF JASON MOYO. HE PRAISED MOYO'S TALENTS AND DEVOTION. "I DON'T KNOW HOW I CAN REPLACE HIM," HE SAID. HE EXPLAINED THAT A FRIEND HAD RECENTLY PROMISED MOYO SOME PICTURES, AND WHEN A PACKAGE MARKED "PHOTOGRAPHS" ARRIVED AT THE ZAPU OFFICE IN LUSAKA, MOYO HAD NO HESITATION IN OPENING IT. "IT IS SO TRAGIC," NKOMO LAMENTED, "BUT IT IS A TRAGIC WORLD AND WE MUST LEARN TO LIVE WITH TRAGEDIES." NKOMO WAS NOT ASKED TO SPECULATE ON WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR MOYO'S DEATH.

2. NKOMO THEN LAUNCHED INTO A STRONG CRITICISM OF BRITISH DIPLOMACY AND IVOR RICHARD. HE PARTICULARLY
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TOOK RICHARD TO TASK FOR THE WAY IN WHICH HE HAD HANDLED IAN SMITH AND EFFECTIVELY LET THE RHODESIAN OFF THE HOOK. HE CLAIMED RICHARD WAS THE WRONG MAN FOR THE JOB AND THAT HIS SOUTHERN AFRICAN MISSION HAD LOST DIRECTION. RICHARD NEVER SHOULD HAVE PRESSED SMITH FOR AN ANSWER TO THE NEW BRITISH PROPOSALS; HE SHOULD MERELY HAVE LEFT THE PAPER IN SALISBURY AND ASKED FOR SMITH'S INITIAL

REACTIONS LATER. DESPITE RICHARD'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY, NKOMO SUSPECTS RICHARD PRESENTED THE PAPER AS A FIRM FORMULA FOR A TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT AND NOT AS A SERIES OF GENERAL IDEAS THAT MIGHT FORM A BASIS FOR NEGOTIATIONS. GIVEN SMITH'S OWN CONSTITUENCY, PARTICULARLY IN THE CABINET AND THE RHODESIA FRONT CAUCUS, HE COULD ONLY HAVE REJECTED THE DOCUMENT WHEN PRESSED FOR AN ANSWER.

3. NKOMO WAS ALSO ANGERED THAT RICHARD'S PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAD IMPLIED THAT THE PATRIOTIC FRONT HAD ACCEPTED THE NEW BRITISH PROPOSALS. NKOMO CLAIMED THAT THE FRONT'S REACTIONS HAD NEVER BEEN COMMUNICATED TO RICHARD AND THAT RICHARD HAD NO AUTHORITY TO SPEAK FOR THE FRONT. NKOMO THEN EXPANDED ON HIS PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE MANNER IN WHICH RICHARD HAD SUSPENDED THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. RICHARD HAD NO REASON TO BURY THE CONFERENCE JUST BECAUSE ONE OF THE DELEGATIONS HAD NOT APPROVED SOME SUGGESTIONS, AND CERTAINLY NO RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SO WITHOUT CONSULTING THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS.

4. NKOMO EXPRESSED HIS FEAR THAT BRITAIN WILL NOW WASH ITS HANDS OF RHODESIAN AFFAIRS AND "LEAVE IT TO THE AMERICANS, AS CERTAIN MPS HAVE SUGGESTED." HE SHOOK HIS HEAD VIGOROUSLY. "THIS IS UNREALISTIC: IT IS A

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 01524

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BRITISH PROBLEM, BUT THEY WILL NEED AMERICAN SUPPORT." EMBASSY OFFICER HANDED NKOMO A COPY OF THE JANUARY 27 USIA WIRELESS FILE REPORTING THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT ON RHODESIA. NKOMO READ THE PAGE CAREFULLY. "THIS IS

RIGHT," HE FINALLY SAID. "THE BRITISH MUST TAKE THE
LEAD AND YOU MUST SUPPORT THEM."

5. NKOMO WAS THEN ASKED FOR HIS REACTIONS TO THE NEW
BRITISH PROPOSALS. WITH SOME HESITATION HE SAID THE SUG-
GESTIONS WERE GOOD. "THEY ARE AN ACCEPTABLE BASIS FOR
NEGOTIATION, BUT OF COURSE THERE WILL HAVE TO BE SOME
CHANGES." EMBASSY OFFICER SUGGESTED THAT CHANGES MEAN
CONCESSIONS, AND NEGOTIATIONS MEAN CONCESSIONS FROM BOTH
SIDES. NKOMO AGREED AND REFERRED TO THE REALITY THAT
SMITH NOW HOLDS POWER IN RHODESIA. WHEN ASKED IF THE NEW
BRITISH PROPOSALS WENT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, NKOMO
DROPPED HIS CAGEY MANNER AND ANSWERED EMPHATICALLY AND
AFFIRMATIVELY.

6. COMMENT: THIS HAS NOT BEEN A GOOD WEEK FOR JOSHUA
NKOMO, AND HIS MOOD OF ANGER AND FRUSTRATION SHOWS IT.
JASON MOYO'S DEATH WAS NOT ONLY A LOSS OF A CLOSE
ASSOCIATE BUT A REMINDER OF NKOMO'S OWN VULNERABILITY.
MOREOVER, THE SUSPENSION IF NOT THE COLLAPSE OF THE NE-
GOTIATING PROCESS SHIFTS FOCUS TO THE GUERRILLA WAR
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WHERE NKOMO IS ON WEAKER GROUND. BOTH PERSONALLY AND
POLITICALLY NKOMO IS PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME WHICH THE
WEEK'S EVENTS HAVE UNDERSCORED.

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